DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 247 TM 830 777

TITLE	Citizenship and Social Studies Achievement of Young Americans: 1981-82 Performance and Changes between 1976 and 1982.
INSTITUTION	Education Commission of the States, Denver, Colo. National Assessment of Educational Progress.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	NAEP-13-CS-01
PUB DATE	Oct 83
GRANT	NIE-G-80-0003
NOTE	35p.; Small print in figures.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Assessment of Educational Progress, Box 2923, Princeton, NJ 08541.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Citizenship; Citizenship Education; *Civics; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Programs; Longitudinal Studies; *Political Attitudes; Political Issues; Social Attitudes; Social Studies; Social Values; Test Results; United States Government (Course)
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress; Second Citizenship Social Studies Assess (1976); *Third Citizenship Social Studies Assess (1982)

ABSTRACT

Between 1976 and 1982, teenagers improved their performance on citizenship/social studies items measuring political knowledge and attitudes--13-year-olds by nearly three percentage points and 17-year-olds by about two percentage points. Results for the various population groups indicated that improvements tended to be greater for lower achieving and disadvantaged students than for groups typically considered more advantaged. When results were analyzed by different areas of political knowledge and attitudes, gains were most apparent on categories dealing with knowledge about government and the political process, while categories concerned largely with attitudes typically showed little change over the 6-year period spanned by the assessments. It is interesting to note that males and females performed about equally well on political knowledge and attitude items, with the exception of a sizable female advantage on items measuring respect for the rights of others. Blacks and disadvantaged-urban students were typically farthest below the nation on items dealing with knowledge about the structure and function of government and closest to national levels on items concerning respect for the rights of others. Primary type of information provided by report: Procedures (Overview); Results (Change). (HFG)

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Citizenship and Social Studies Achievement of Young Americans: 1981-82 Performance and Changes Between 1976 and 1982

no. 13-CS-01

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October 1983

National Assessment of Educational Progress
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As part of its ongoing survey of American young people's educational achievements, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measured performance in citizenship/social studies during the 1981-82 school year. Students aged 9, 13 and 17 were surveyed, providing an overview of achievement levels at various points in the schooling process.

The 1981-82 assessment was the third NAEP survey of citizenship and social studies, allowing analyses of changes in achievement over time. This report describes 1981-82 achievement levels for all three ages and provides data on changes in teenagers' performance between the second assessment of citizenship and social studies in 1975-76 and the third assessment. The first assessment of citizenship took place in 1969-70 and the first assessment of social studies in 1971-72; changes between the first and second assessments are chronicled in other National Assessment reports (1978a, 1978b).

The National Assessment is charged by the U.S. Department of Education to monitor periodically the educational achievements of American youth, reporting performance levels on various subjects taught in the schools and changes in those levels over time. National Assessment reports results for the nation as a whole and for various subgroups within the national population, so that variations in achievement levels can be detected.

To measure performance in a learning area, National Assessment first establishes the objectives to be achieved, using a consensus process. Teachers, administrators, subject matter experts and concerned citizens, representing a broad range of backgrounds, work together to set objectives that are important for young people to accomplish and that reflect what is happening in the nation's schools. Items are then developed to measure these objectives. The items are reviewed extensively by broadly representative groups to ensure that they are free from bias and are accurate measures of the objectives. Assessment staff select a sample of students designed to be representative of the nation as a whole, and a specially trained field staff travels around the country to administer assessment items to the selected students. Following each assessment, the data are tabulated, analyzed and reported to the public.

The Citizenship/Social Studies Assessment

The 1981-82 assessment marked the first time that National Assessment combined citizenship and social studies as a unified area with a single set of learning objectives. Because the two areas are similar in nature, NAEP found it most efficient to combine them.

Financial considerations dictated that the third citizenship/social studies assessment be smaller in scope than previous assessments in these areas, with reductions in both the number of students and the number of items assessed. In light of these reductions, National Assessment opted for broad coverage of the five major citizenship/social studies objectives established for the 1981-82 assessment. The objectives are not surveyed in as much depth as would be desirable and all objectives were not covered at each age level; however, some information is available on each objective.

Because of the reduced size of this assessment, 9-year-olds responded only to questions on Objectives I-IV. No information is available concerning their awareness of the development of the United States (Objective V). Thirteen- and 17-year-olds responded to questions covering all five objectives.

To provide data on changes in performance, a number of items administered to teenagers in the 1976 assessment were readministered in 1982. These items are concentrated in Objective V and for the most part are concerned with knowledge and attitudes regarding the United States and its development. Funding limitations prevented collection of data on changes in 9-year-olds' achievement.

Approximately 24,400 pupils took part in the 1981-82 citizenship/social studies assessment -- 10,000 9-year-olds, 7,200 13-year-olds and 7,200 17-year-olds. Each student responded to only a portion of the items making up the entire assessment, with approximately 2,000 9-year-olds, 1,200 13-year-olds and 1,200 17-year-olds responding to each item for their age group. These sample sizes provide stable national and subgroup estimates on major objectives. Item-level data for teenagers in some of the smaller reporting groups may not be reliable. Therefore, this report is limited to national and subgroup data on major objectives and national item-level results. Information on the technical aspects of the citizenship/social studies assessments is presented in Procedural Handbook: 1981-82 Mathematics and Citizenship/Social Studies Assessments (1983).

Highlights of the Results

Following are highlights of the NAEP citizenship/social studies findings:

- Thirteen- and 17-year-olds improved their citizenship/social studies performance in the six years between the 1976 and 1982 assessments -- 13-year-olds by nearly 3 percentage points and 17-year-olds by about 2 percentage points.

- Improvements were typically larger for lower achieving students than for higher achieving pupils. Blacks, disadvantaged-urban residents, those

whose parents had not graduated from high school and those in the lowest citizenship/social studies achievement quartile tended to show greater improvements than the national average.

- For both groups of teenagers, improvements occured on items concerning the structure and function of the U.S. government and the U.S. political process. On items measuring respect for the rights of others, performance of both 13- and 17-year-olds remained at 1976 levels. Knowledge of and support for constitutional rights improved at age 13 but did not change at age 17.

- Performance on items measuring objectives dealing with information usage and interpersonal skills was generally fairly high. Slightly lower percentages of students were successful in responding to items measuring knowledge and attitudes regarding the development of the United States.

- The NAEP findings provide evidence of an association between achievement and socioeconomic status, with those in higher socioeconomic status groups showing higher achievement levels and those from lower socioeconomic strata displaying lower achievement levels. Performing above the nation on citizenship/social studies items were advantaged-urban residents, those with at least one parent having education beyond high school and those enrolled in or above the modal grade for their age (the grade in which most youngsters that age are enrolled). Typically below the nation were residents of the Southeast, Blacks, disadvantaged-urban students, those whose parents had not graduated from high school and those enrolled in the grade below the modal grade.

- For teenagers, the difference in performance between the lowest and mid-low achievement quartiles was greater than that between any other adjacent quartiles in the 1981-82 assessment. This indicates a considerable gap between the lowest achievement quartile and the rest of the students, perhaps providing evidence of a group with achievement patterns considerably different than those of their peers.

Organization of This Report

The next chapter details 1981-82 performance on the five major citizenship/social studies objectives for the nation and various population subgroups. The third chapter presents changes between the second and third citizenship/social studies assessments, indicating national and subgroup trends. Appendix A provides definitions of population subgroups discussed in this report.

CHAPTER 2

Citizenship/Social Studies Achievement: 1981-82

The citizenship/social studies objectives have been drawn from many sources and express a variety of perspectives regarding the goals of citizenship/social studies education. The objectives do not promote any particular educational, political or social viewpoint but draw freely on all the major social science disciplines. Throughout, the objectives display a concern for political and cultural differences by stressing the importance of an interest in human interrelationships and a concern for basic human rights.

The citizenship/social studies assessment measured achievement of five major objectives, listed in Figure 1. Additional information about the objectives appears in Citizenship and Social Studies Objectives: 1981-82 Assessment (1980).

FIGURE 1

1981-82 Citizenship/Social Studies Objectives

I. Demonstrates Skills Necessary to Acquire Information

II. Demonstrates Skills Necessary to Use Information

III. Demonstrates an Understanding of Individual Development and the Skills Necessary to Communicate with Others

IV. Demonstrates an Understanding of and Interest in the Ways Human Beings Organize, Adapt to and Change Their Environments.

V. Demonstrates an Understanding of and Interest in the Development of the United States

Selected Results: 1981-82

The following sections illustrate the types of items used to assess each of the five major citizenship/social studies objectives and provide a sampling of achievement levels. The items presented here represent but a small fraction of those used to measure each objective and are intended only to give a flavor of the kinds of skills assessed and performance levels achieved.

Objective I

Objective I examines students' ability to acquire information. Two major skills were assessed: (1) the ability to use information sources such as maps, tables, indexes, dictionaries and other reference materials and (2) the ability to define appropriate questions and methods to gather information.

As background information, 9-year-olds were asked about their experiences with various reference materials (Figure 2). Considerably more 9-year-olds had worked with maps than with graphs or tables.

FIGURE 2

Percentages of 9-year-olds who had used various reference materials.

Have you ever studied how to use any of the following?

Percentages of 9-year-olds responding "yes"

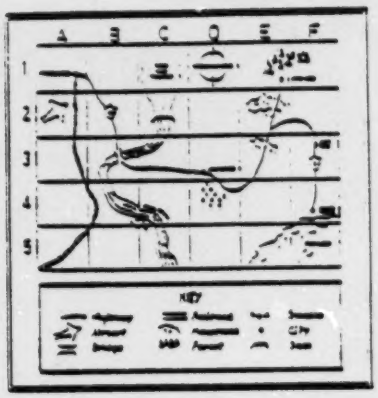
Maps	86%
Globes	76%
Charts	62%
Graphs	58%
Tables	55%

Perhaps because many had studied maps, the majority of 9-year-olds successfully used a map to locate information. They were somewhat more adept in using the map grid to locate information than the map key (Figure 2). As examples of ability to use other sources of information, 91% of the 13-year-olds correctly identified the purpose of a glossary, and 85% knew when it was appropriate to consult a book's index. Seventy-three percent of the 13-year-olds correctly read information from a circle graph.

Figure 4 displays an item designed to measure skills at framing questions to elicit information. This skill appears considerably better developed among teenagers than among 9-year-olds.

FIGURE 3

Percentages of 9-year-olds correctly responding to map usage item.



Look at the map. Notice the numbers on the left side of the map, the letters on the top of the map and the key below the map. Use the map and the map key to answer the questions below and on the next page.

Which city is located in F4?

Percentages of 9-year-olds answering correctly

- Beach Haven
- Centerville
- Pine City
- Pleasantville
- I don't know.

Which natural resource is located closest to Pine City?

- Lake
- River
- Swamp
- Forest
- I don't know.

On an item more directly tied to the political process, 37% of the 13-year-olds and 59% of the 17-year-olds could think of two ways to find out why candidates for a public office hold the views they do on an issue. Eighty percent of the 13-year-olds and 81% of the 17-year-olds could think of two relevant questions to ask candidates regarding their positions on a particular issue.

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FIGURE 4

Percentages of 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds correctly determining appropriate question to ask to gather needed information.

A group in your town wants to get a law passed that will stop people from owning dogs because they claim dogs run loose and are dangerous to children. Your class wants to find out what people in your neighborhood think about this idea.

Which question would be BEST to ask people in your neighborhood?

- Do you think this group wants to help the neighborhood?
- Why do you think a law against dogs is needed?
- Do your children have a dog?
- Are you for or against a law about owning dogs?
- I don't know.

Percentages answering correctly		
Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
45%	73%	76%

Objective II

Objective II focuses upon the skills needed to use information once it is obtained. Included are skills in organizing, applying and evaluating information and abilities in using information to make decisions.

A number of items measuring skills at organizing and applying information asked students to identify the best conclusion to be drawn about information given in graphs, tables or written statements. One such item appears in Figure 5. Many 13- and 17-year-olds had difficulty interpreting the information shown in the chart -- some 44% of the 13-year-olds and 37% of the 17-year-olds failed to draw the appropriate conclusion.

Figure 6 presents an item designed to determine how well students could evaluate information. Students had to pick the statement most effective in proving that merry-go-rounds can be dangerous. Thirteen-year-olds showed considerably more ability than 9-year-olds at this task, with seven in ten 13-year-olds able to identify the most persuasive statement.

Other items assessed students' awareness of the best way to pursue the decision-making process (Figure 7). By far the majority of the teenagers agreed that the way to solve the dilemma presented in this item was to place the issue on the ballot and let all the people decide. In another item focusing on decision making, 78% of the 13-year-olds were able to give at least two factors a voter should think about in deciding how to cast a vote on whether to build a new school. And in an assessment of factors on which to base voting judgments, 56% of the 13-year-olds and 67% of the 17-year-olds said they would vote for a candidate other than their best friend for a school office if the other candidate clearly were better qualified.

FIGURE 5

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds correctly answering item about interpreting information.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEVEL AND AMOUNT OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY

	Very Active	Fairly Active	Fairly Inactive	Very Inactive
College Education	28%	30%	30%	12%
High School Education	9%	17%	40%	34%
Grade School Education	5%	11%	33%	51%

According to the information in the table, which hypothesis would be BEST to choose for further investigation?

- Hypothesis 1: The more education people have, the less politically active they are.
- Hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between level of education and amount of political activity.
- Hypothesis 3: The more education people have, the more politically active they are.
- Hypothesis 4: The less education people have, the more politically active they are.
- I don't know.

Percentages answering correctly	
Age 13	Age 17
16%	63%

FIGURE 6

Percentages of 9- and 13-year-olds correctly determining statement that best supports an assertion.

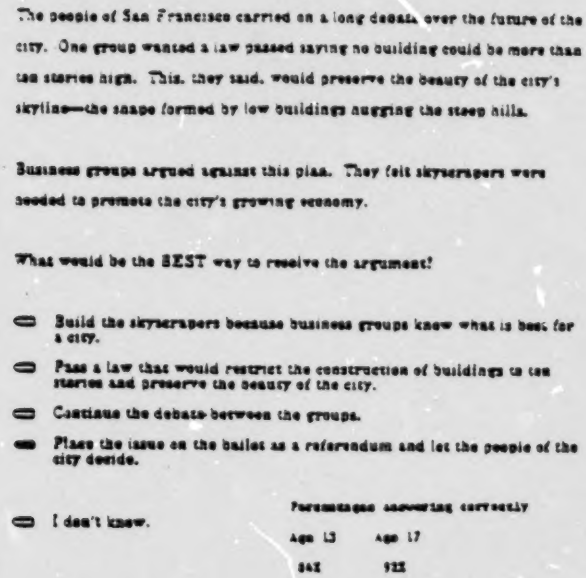
Which statement would be the BEST one to prove that a merry-go-round on a school playground can be a dangerous piece of equipment?

- Last year ten thousand children in the U.S. were injured on the merry-go-round.
- The principal at a local elementary school had the merry-go-round removed because she felt that the children might hurt themselves.
- The parents think the teachers should be present when children are riding on the merry-go-round.
- Three students at school were sent to the nurse when they had an accident on the merry-go-round yesterday.
- I don't know.

Percentages answering correctly	
Age 9	Age 13
15%	71%

FIGURE 7

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds identifying best way to solve a dispute.


The people of San Francisco carried on a long debate over the future of the city. One group wanted a law passed saying no building could be more than ten stories high. This, they said, would preserve the beauty of the city's skyline—the shape formed by low buildings hugging the steep hills.
Business groups argued against this plan. They felt skyscrapers were needed to promote the city's growing economy.
What would be the BEST way to resolve the argument?
Build the skyscrapers because business groups know what is best for a city.
Pass a law that would restrict the construction of buildings to ten stories and preserve the beauty of the city.
Continue the debate between the groups.
Place the issue on the ballot as a referendum and let the people of the city decide.
I don't know.
Percentages answering correctly
Age 13
Age 17
84%
92%

Objective III

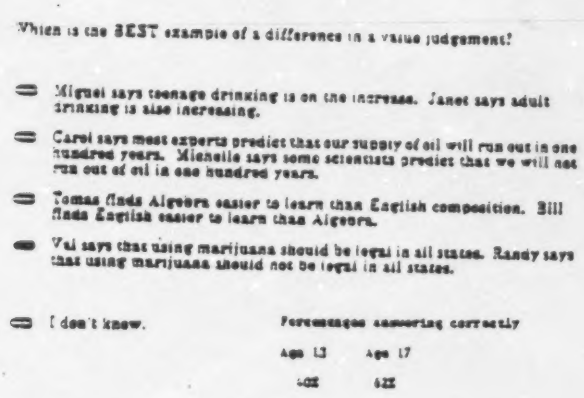
Objective III examines the ability to identify and examine one's personal values and the ability to interact with others in positive and effective ways.

Items surveying awareness of values covered both individual and group behaviors. In a question regarding individual values, about half the 9-year-olds and about four-fifths of the 13- and 17-year-olds recognized that a person's tastes are often influenced by his or her friends. As Figure 8 shows, 40% of the 13-year-olds and 62% of the 17-year-olds correctly identified the situation that evidenced a difference in values rather than in facts or opinions. Regarding group behavior, over three-fifths at age 13 realized that students handing out pamphlets and picketing to protest a government action were expressing their beliefs without violating the rights of others.

Other items addressed personal interaction skills. When asked about a situation in which it was not clear what a teacher wanted on an assignment, 52% of the 9-year-olds, 87% of the 13-year-olds and 91% of the 17-year-olds correctly said that the best course of action was to ask the teacher, rather than relying on friends, parents or one's own best guess.

FIGURE 8

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds correctly identifying a value judgement.


Which is the BEST example of a difference in a value judgement?
Miguel says teenage drinking is on the increase. Janet says adult drinking is also increasing.
Carol says most experts predict that our supply of oil will run out in one hundred years. Michelle says some scientists predict that we will not run out of oil in one hundred years.
Tomas finds Algebra easier to learn than English composition. Bill finds English easier to learn than Algebra.
Val says that using marijuana should be legal in all states. Randy says that using marijuana should not be legal in all states.
I don't know.
Percentages answering correctly
Age 13
Age 17
40%
62%

Objective IV

Objective IV examines students' understanding of a wider network of human relationships -- people's interaction with the environment, the relationships among humans in groups and societies and the interrelationships among societies. This objective also assesses students' awareness of and commitment to human rights worldwide.

With respect to the natural environment, 73% of the 9-year-olds knew that oceans cover the greatest part of the world's surface. In an item on factors that might affect a particular environment, youngsters appeared most aware of the potential impact of an oil spill, probably because such situations have received extensive media attention (Figure 9). Students appeared less aware of the possible change brought about by a new dam or a change in the fish population.

Other items assessed young people's awareness of other societies. Following are some examples: 49% of the 9-year-olds and 70% of the 13-year-olds recognized that people of widely disparate ages and backgrounds all have the same basic needs in life; 56% of the 13-year-olds and 64% of the 17-year-olds recognized that many people in the world rarely eat meat because grains are less expensive for the amount of energy they provide. Only half of the 17-year-olds were aware that the world's population grows in an exponential fashion (Figure 10). As seen in Figure 11, 81% of the 13-year-olds and 90% of the 17-year-olds correctly indicated that the concept of freedom can mean different things to people in different circumstances.

FIGURE 9

Percentages of 9-, 13- and 17-year-olds recognizing the effect of various factors on a natural environment.

Which of the following changes probably would affect the living things in and around a river and which probably would not? Fill in only one oval for each part.

	Probably Would Affect the Living Things	Probably Would NOT Affect the Living Things	I don't know.
	Percentages answering correctly		
	Age 9	Age 13	Age 17
A sudden increase in the fish population	49%	61%	67%
An oil spill along the coast of the ocean into which the river flows	74%	91%	88%
A change in the chemicals used in the soil of nearby farms	47%	69%	81%
The construction of a new dam to control flooding	32%	47%	57%
A leak in a nearby city's main water pipe	42%	62%	69%

FIGURE 10

Percentages of 17-year-olds recognizing that world population grows exponentially.

Social scientists use the term exponential growth to describe the process by which a quantity of something increases at a fixed rate. For example, if you were to put a penny in a bank and double it every day, the amount would grow in an exponential fashion. At the end of 30 days you would have over 5 million dollars.

First day - 1¢
Second day - 2¢
Third day - 4¢
Fourth day - 8¢
Fifth day - 16¢
Tenth day - $5.12
Fifteenth day - $163.84
Twenty-fifth day - $167,772.16
Thirtieth day - $5,368,709.12

Which of the following tends to grow in an exponential fashion?

- Age of a person
- Acceleration of an automobile
- Stock price per share
- World population

Percentages of 17-year-olds answering correctly

51%

- I don't know.

FIGURE 11

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds understanding that definitions of freedom may differ.

Maria and Ming are friends. Ming's parents were born in China and have lived in the U. S. for twenty years.

"People have no freedom in China," Maria insists. "There is only one party in the elections and the newspapers are run by the government."

"People in China do have freedom," Ming insists. "No one goes hungry. Everyone has an opportunity to work and medical care is free. Can there be greater freedom than that?"

What is the BEST conclusion to draw from this debate?

- Ming does not understand the meaning of *freedom*.
- Maria and Ming differ in their opinions of the meaning of *freedom*.
- There is *freedom* in the U. S. but not in China.
- People have greater *freedom* in China than in the U. S.

- I don't know.

Percentages answering correctly

Age 13	Age 17
31%	90%

Objective V

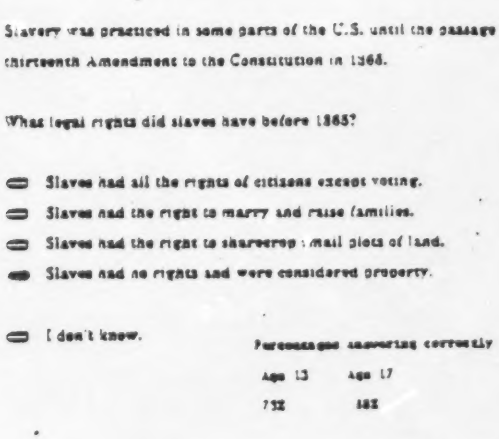
Objective V deals with students' understanding of the development of the United States, including its history, governmental structure, economic and legal systems and political processes. Also assessed were students' knowledge of and support for the rights guaranteed to individuals in the United States.

Data are presented only for 13- and 17-year-olds on Objective V items, since no items measuring this objective were administered to 9-year-olds.

As Figure 12 shows, 75% of the 13-year-olds and 88% of the 17-year-olds recognized that slaves were considered property in the United States before 1865. In other items dealing with the historical development of the United States, nearly eight in ten 17-year-olds correctly identified the principle behind rationing during World War II (Figure 13); very few of the teenagers -- 10% of the 13-year-olds and 19% of the 17-year-olds -- knew that the 1954 Brown V. Board of Education decision affected education in the United States by ruling that separate schools for different races are inherently unequal.

FIGURE 12

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds recognizing status of slaves before 1865.

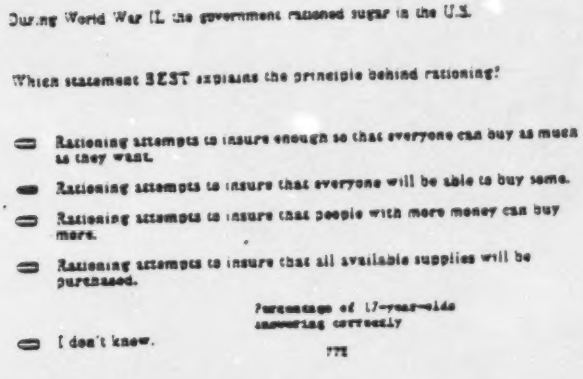

Slavery was practiced in some parts of the U.S. until the passage of the thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1866.
What legal rights did slaves have before 1865?
Slaves had all the rights of citizens except voting.
Slaves had the right to marry and raise families.
Slaves had the right to sharecrop small plots of land.
Slaves had no rights and were considered property.
I don't know.
Percentage answering correctly
Age 13
Age 17
75%
88%

As seen in Figure 14, the majority of the teenagers knew which prominent governmental figures were elected and which appointed to office. Awareness levels were highest for the more visible elected officials -- the President and state governors. Results from another item showed that only 26% of the 13-year-olds and 40% of the 17-year-olds were aware that the Communist party can nominate a candidate for president of the United States.

Data presented in Figure 15 indicate that many 13- and 17-year-olds are not well versed on what can happen to a law after it is passed by Congress. Many

FIGURE 13

Percentages of 17-year-olds understanding the principle of rationing.


During World War II, the government rationed sugar in the U.S.
Which statement BEST explains the principle behind rationing?
Rationing attempts to insure enough so that everyone can buy as much as they want.
Rationing attempts to insure that everyone will be able to buy some.
Rationing attempts to insure that people with more money can buy more.
Rationing attempts to insure that all available supplies will be purchased.
I don't know.
Percentage of 17-year-olds answering correctly
77%

failed to realize that the President cannot declare laws unconstitutional. In response to a question dealing with the country's fiscal system, some 51% of the 13-year-olds and 57% of the 17-year-olds correctly answered that personal income taxes, not sales taxes, gifts or bond sales, provide the most income for the federal government.

Other items assessed attitudes regarding the rights of individuals in the United States and actions that students would take with respect to these rights. With respect to constitutional rights, 38% of the 13-year-olds and 62% of the 17-year-olds correctly responded that a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime even if new evidence becomes available. Over 90% of the 13-year-olds agreed that children of different races should all be able to play in one park. Seventy-nine percent of the 17-year-olds felt that newspapers should be able to publish information about mistakes made by government officials. Eighty percent of the 17-year-olds said they would vote when they reached 18. Some 40-47% of the 13-year-olds indicated they would like to be involved in political campaign activities, and 42% of the 13-year-olds and 57% of the 17-year-olds said they would try to get an unjust law changed and gave a specific way they could work to change it.

FIGURE 14

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds knowing whether various officials are elected or appointed.

A. Is the President of the United States usually elected or appointed to office?

	Percentages answering correctly	
	Age 13	Age 17
⊖ Elected ⊖ Appointed	98%	98%
⊖ I don't know.		

B. Is the Secretary of Defense of the United States usually elected or appointed to office?

⊖ Elected ⊖ Appointed	74%	16%
⊖ I don't know.		

C. Are state governors usually elected or appointed to office?

⊖ Elected ⊖ Appointed	92%	95%
⊖ I don't know.		

D. Is the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court usually elected or appointed to office?

⊖ Elected	63%	77%
⊖ Appointed		
⊖ I don't know.		

E. Are United States senators usually elected or appointed to office?

⊖ Elected ⊖ Appointed	84%	89%
⊖ I don't know.		

FIGURE 15

Percentages of 13- and 17-year-olds aware of what can happen to laws after their passage.

Is each of the following true or false? Fill in only one oval for each part. Once a law is passed by the U. S. Congress:

	True	False	I don't know.	Percentages answering correctly: Age 13	Age 17
the law cannot be changed.	○	●	○	76%	84%
the law can be declared unconstitutional by the president.	○	●	○	21%	30%
the law can be interpreted by the U. S. Courts.	●	○	○	65%	76%
the law remains in the U. S. law books for a maximum of fifty years.	○	●	○	64%	64%
a constitutional amendment may be passed that could change or repeal the law.	●	○	○	82%	90%

Results by Population Group

In addition to national achievement levels, National Assessment reports results for various subgroups within the national population. Variables reported upon include sex, racial/ethnic group, region of the country, type of community, level of parents' education, grade in school and level of citizenship/social studies achievement. Definitions of groups identified within each of these variables appear in Appendix A.

Tables 1-3 show differences in percentage points between performances of the various groups and the nation for each of the three ages surveyed. The figures shown in the tables represent differences between average performance of a group and the nation, that is, the average of percentages of students correctly responding to each item measuring a particular objective. Positive differences indicate distance above national performance, while negative numbers describe distance below the nation.

National average percentage levels on various objectives are displayed for information purposes only; these percentages should not be compared because they represent performance averaged over different sets of items. Differences from national performance can, however, be compared.

The most striking feature of these results is their overall consistency. Regardless of age level or objective, the same groups tended to show performance above and below national levels.

The following groups typically outperformed the nation:

- o Advantaged-urban residents.
- o Those with at least one parent having education beyond high school.
- o Those enrolled in or above the modal grade for their age (the grade in which most students that age are enrolled).

Typically achieving below national levels were:

- o Residents of the Southeast.
- o Disadvantaged-urban dwellers.
- o Blacks.
- o Those whose parents had not graduated from high school.
- o Those enrolled in the grade below the modal grade.

Those from the northeastern, central and western regions; rural residents; and those with at least one parent who has graduated from high school tended to perform about at national levels.

These patterns of performance mirror those found for other subjects surveyed by National Assessment. It is worth noting that a number of variables, such as type of community lived in, level of parents' education and racial/ethnic group, are often linked to students' socioeconomic status. The NAEP findings provide evidence of a strong association between achievement and socioeconomic status, with those in higher socioeconomic status groups showing higher achievement and those from lower socioeconomic strata displaying lower achievement levels.

The Southeast was the only region that showed a consistent difference from the nation. This region's performance deficit may well be tied to economic conditions, since the South, as a region, has less wealth available and spends less on education than other regions.

Contrary to findings in many other subject areas, differences between the sexes on the citizenship/social studies objectives were slight. In contrast, females have an edge in reading and writing, particularly at the younger ages, while high school males typically take the lead in mathematics. Consistent sex differences in citizenship/social studies performance appeared only for Objective III, on which females held a distinct advantage. Objective III deals with

personal values and interpersonal skills, areas in which females may have more expertise or, at the least, may be more adept in giving the desired response. A slight female advantage was also noticeable at ages 9 and 13 on Objective II, which involves skills in using information and awareness of successful decision-making strategies.

A comparison of performance across objectives shows the largest differences between high and low performing groups typically occurred on Objectives I and II — objectives that concern use of specific information usage skills. Among 9-year-olds, differences were generally smallest on Objective IV, which investigates awareness of interrelationships in the human community.

Among teenagers, the objectives on which differences were smallest varied by population group. It is interesting to note, however, that at age 13 Blacks and disadvantaged-urban residents were closest to the nation on Objective V. By age 17, Blacks and disadvantaged-urban residents were about equally close to the nation on Objectives IV and V, with a wider gap between themselves and the nation on other objectives. These objectives not only deal with knowledge about the United States (Objective V) and about other societies (Objective IV), but also with awareness of and support for human rights. Blacks' and disadvantaged-urban residents' personal experiences may have made them more aware of the need for human rights, and this may have helped them perform better relative to the nation on these objectives.

Results for 13- and 17-year-olds were also analyzed by citizenship/social studies achievement levels. Students were categorized in quartiles according to their performance on all citizenship/social studies items to which they responded. As Tables 2 and 3 show, the distance between the highest and lowest achieving groups was sizable. Also of interest is the fact that the distance between the lowest and the mid-low quartiles was greater than the distance between any of the other adjacent quartiles for both ages and all objectives. This would indicate a very considerable gap between the lowest achievement quartile and the remainder of the student population, providing evidence of a subgroup of students with achievement levels far below those of their peers.

TABLE 1: Average Differences From National Performance on Major Citizenship/Social Studies Objectives for Selected Population Groups, Age 9.

	Obj. I	Obj. II	Obj. III	Obj. IV
No. of Items	21	11	10	24
Nation	61.6%	43.6%	50.2%	65.0%
Male	-0.2	-1.4	-1.7*	-0.6
Female	0.2	1.3	1.6*	0.6
Northeast	1.8	1.9	1.3	1.6
Southeast	-4.4*	-4.2*	-4.6*	-3.3*
Central	2.3*	2.3	2.4*	0.6
West	-0.1	-0.2	0.5	1.0
White	3.3*	3.5*	2.7*	2.1*
Black	-14.9*	-15.7*	-12.1*	-9.0*
Extreme rural	-3.6*	-4.2*	-0.8	-1.9
Disad.-urban	-14.5*	-15.5*	-12.7*	-10.1*
Advan.-urban	11.6*	13.8*	9.8*	5.6*
Not grad.	-9.1*	-11.0*	-6.6*	-7.6*
Grad. High School	0.0	-1.0	0.3	0.5
Post high school	4.7*	5.9*	3.5*	3.7*
3d grade	-12.5*	-12.6*	-9.7*	-6.8*
4th grade	5.6*	5.4*	4.4*	3.1*

*Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 2: Average Differences From National Performance on Major Citizenship/Social Studies Objectives for Selected Population Groups, Age 13.

	Obj. I	Obj. II	Obj. III	Obj. IV	Obj. V
No. of items	26	26	19	40	122
National Percentage	75.3%	68.6%	71.5%	69.1%	58.0%
Male	-0.7	-1.4*	-2.9*	-1.3	0.1
Female	0.7	1.3	2.8*	1.3	-0.1
Northeast	2.1	1.9	2.2	1.8	2.1
Southeast	-3.4*	-2.7*	-2.3	-2.8*	-2.6
Central	1.2	1.0	0.2	0.4	0.6
West	-0.4	-0.6	-0.3	0.1	-0.5
White	3.0*	3.1*	2.1*	2.0	1.6
Black	-14.0*	-13.6*	-9.6*	-8.9*	-6.4*
Extreme rural	-1.1	-0.6	-2.1	-1.7	-1.0
Disad.-urban	-12.8*	-10.6*	-8.3*	-8.6*	-5.4*
Advan.-urban	6.9*	6.7*	4.0*	4.6*	5.4*
Not grad.	-8.5*	-8.9*	-5.6*	-7.2*	-6.7*
Grad. H.S.	-1.4	-2.2*	-1.3	-1.5*	-1.9*
Post H.S. education	4.9*	5.6*	3.5*	4.0*	4.2
7th grade	-7.4*	-6.8*	-5.3*	-4.3*	-4.4*
8th grade	3.2*	2.9*	2.3*	1.8*	1.9*
Low ach.	-19.4*	-22.0*	-17.5*	-16.8*	-16.7*
Mid-low	-1.6	-3.1*	-0.7	-1.8*	-3.8*
Mid-high	6.3*	8.1*	6.3*	4.9*	4.6*
High	14.6*	17.0*	11.9*	13.7*	15.9*

*Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 3: Average Differences From National Performance on Major Citizenship/Social Studies Objectives for Selected Population Groups, Age 17.

	Obj. I	Obj. II	Obj. III	Obj. IV	Obj. V
Number of items	19	16	14	31	133
National percentage	76.6%	76.6%	80.6%	73.2%	64.8%
Male	-0.9	-0.5	-1.6*	-0.4	0.4
Female	0.9	0.4	1.5*	0.4	-0.4
Northeast	1.3	0.4	-0.2	0.7	0.7
Southeast	-3.1*	-2.5	-1.9	-4.5*	-2.4
Central	1.0	1.0	0.4	1.2	1.4
West	1.1	0.9	1.5	2.1	-0.1
White	2.6*	2.9*	2.2*	1.7	2.0*
Black	-13.1*	-13.7*	-10.7*	-9.3*	-9.1*
Extreme rural	-2.5	-1.9	1.0	-0.8	-1.1
Disad.-urban	-11.1*	-10.7*	-8.3*	-7.4*	-7.3*
Advan.-urban	8.1*	8.2*	6.5*	6.0*	8.9*
Not grad.	-7.3*	-8.0*	-5.6*	-5.7*	-7.5*
Grad. H.S.	-1.5	-3.3*	-1.5	-1.8*	-2.6*
Post H.S. education	3.8*	5.0*	3.4*	3.5*	4.6*
10th grade	-9.7*	-10.8*	-7.4*	-7.4*	-10.1*
11th grade	2.1*	2.1*	1.6*	1.6*	1.9*
12th grade	4.6*	4.7*	3.2*	2.9*	4.4*
Low ach.	-19.0*	-22.1*	-17.7*	-15.4*	-19.5*
Mid-low	-0.8	-1.3	-1.2	-2.1*	-3.7*
Mid-high	6.4*	8.1*	6.3*	5.1*	6.1*
High	13.4*	15.3*	12.6*	12.3*	17.1*

*Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.

Summary

Results for the various population groups parallel those seen in other subject areas surveyed by National Assessment, with students from more advantaged circumstances performing above the nation and students from environments typically considered disadvantaged generally achieving below national levels. Males and females displayed very similar performance on the citizenship/social studies items, with the exception of a female advantage on items measuring interpersonal skills and ability to identify personal beliefs and values. Blacks and disadvantaged-urban residents, while remaining below the nation, showed performance closest to national levels on objectives that dealt in part with awareness of human rights. Results for students in the lowest achievement quartile indicate that a large gap exists between this group and other students.

CHAPTER 3

Changes in Citizenship/Social Studies Performance: 1976-82

To measure changes in citizenship/social studies achievement between 1976 and 1982, a number of items assessed in the second citizenship/social studies assessment were reassessed in the third. As noted previously, most of these items came under Objective V of the 1981-82 citizenship/social studies objectives, dealing with awareness of the development of the United States. However, when included in the 1976 assessment these items were specifically intended to measure a more limited aspect of that objective: students' political knowledge and attitudes with respect to the United States. Items were designed to assess four major areas of political knowledge and attitudes: (1) knowledge of the structure and function of the United States government, (2) knowledge about and participation in the U.S. political process, (3) respect for the rights of others and (4) knowledge of and support for constitutional rights.

As noted earlier, items intended to assess changes in performance were administered only to 13- and 17-year-olds; thus, no information on changes in 9-year-olds' citizenship/social studies achievement is available.

Changes were determined by averaging percentages of correct responses over all items surveyed at an age level in a particular assessment and then calculating the difference between these averages across assessments. In the following tables, positive changes indicate an improvement in performance between assessments and negative changes, a decline. Averages across ages should not be compared because each age group responded to a slightly different set of items.

Overall Changes in Citizenship/Social Studies Performance

Data on changes in citizenship/social studies show that both 13- and 17-year-olds improved their performance levels over the six-year period between the 1976 and 1982 assessments -- 13-year-olds by nearly 3 percentage points and 17-year-olds by about 2 percentage points (Table 4).

Considered in light of NAEP findings in other subject areas, these results provide additional evidence of a trend toward improvement in young Americans' academic achievements. Achievement in writing, reading and mathematics over the period from the mid-seventies to the opening of the eighties was generally stable; however, sizable improvements occurred for 9-year-olds in reading and 13-year-olds in mathematics. No significant declines were reported. This contrasts with results from the early 1970s when declines were much in evidence,

TABLE 4: Changes in Average Percent Correct Between 1976 and 1982 Citizenship/Social Studies Assessments, Ages 13 and 17.

	No. of Items	1975-76	1981-82	Change
13-year-olds	98	61.1%	64.0%	2.9*
17-year-olds	90	67.7	69.8	2.1*

*Indicates change is significant at the .05 level.

particularly for 17-year-olds. The citizenship/social studies findings are especially noteworthy because the upward trend extends across two age levels. Even more encouraging, these results mark the first instance of an overall improvement for 17-year-olds in any subject area since National Assessment first began collecting data in 1969.

Results for the nation as a whole tell but part of the story. An examination of findings for the various population groups shows that patterns of change vary by background characteristics (Tables 5 and 6). It should be noted that regional data are omitted in these tables because large standard errors for these groups make data less meaningful.

Tables 5 and 6 reveal that, generally speaking, lower performing groups tended to make greater gains than higher performing groups. Results for 13-year-olds show that Blacks tended to make greater gains than Whites, those whose parents had lower levels of education improved more than those with parents having higher education levels and those in lower citizenship/social studies achievement quartiles gained more than those in the highest group. Extreme rural and disadvantaged-urban residents tended to show greater gains than those from advantaged-urban surroundings, although none of the changes for these groups was significant because the small sample size made estimates for these groups less stable.

Among 17-year-olds, many of the same trends were apparent. The sole exception occurred for the type of community variable, on which advantaged-urban youngsters showed considerably larger gains than those from other type of community groups.

These findings parallel NAEP results in other subject areas assessed over roughly the same time span. In reading, writing and mathematics, a general trend has been for disadvantaged youngsters to improve more than those from circumstances usually considered more advantaged -- a trend that is apparently carried through in the citizenship/social studies findings. In other areas, this trend has been most in evidence at the younger two ages. Here, the same pattern extends to 17-year-olds, although it is not as as marked as for 13-year-olds.

TABLE 5: Changes in Average Percent Correct Between 1976 and 1982 Citizenship/Social Studies Assessments for Various Population Groups, Age 13.

	1975-76	1981-82	Change
Nation	61.1%	64.0%	2.9*
Male	60.8	63.1	2.3*
Female	61.3	64.9	3.6*
White	62.9	65.7	2.8*
Black	52.2	57.1	4.9*
Extreme rural	60.6	63.0	2.4
Disad.-urban	55.0	57.2	2.2
Advan.-urban	68.3	68.1	-0.2
Not graduated	54.3	57.7	3.4*
Graduated	59.7	62.3	2.6*
Post h.s. education	66.3	68.0	1.7
7th grade	55.4	59.8	4.4*
8th grade	63.5	65.8	2.3*
Low achievers	43.0	47.0	4.0*
Mid-low achievers	57.7	60.9	3.2*
Mid-high achievers	66.2	68.8	2.6*
High achievers	77.4	79.3	1.9

*Indicates change is significant at the .05 level.

A number of factors may have contributed to this pattern. During the period spanned by these assessments, minimum competency testing was implemented in many states, while the back-to-basics movement continued to influence the direction of the curriculum. A result of these activities may have been increased concentration on skills needed most by those at the lower end of the achievement scale. Minimum competency testing often includes compensatory or remedial components (Pipho 1979), which may have served to benefit disadvantaged students. Comparable levels of attention are only now beginning to be focused on those at the upper end of the academic ladder, after a decade in which improvement of basic level skills was of paramount concern.

TABLE 6: Changes in Average Percent Correct Between 1976 and 1982 Citizenship/Social Studies Assessments for Various Population Groups, Age 17.

	1975-76	1981-82	Change
Nation	67.7%	69.8%	2.1*
Male	67.5	69.1	1.6
Female	67.8	70.4	2.6*
White	69.3	71.5	2.2
Black	58.5	62.0	3.5
Extreme rural	67.0	68.7	1.7
Disad.-urban	61.9	63.4	1.5
Advan.-urban	73.2	77.5	4.3*
Not graduated	60.4	63.5	3.1*
Graduated	66.2	67.2	1.0
Post h.s. education	72.8	74.0	1.2
10th grade	58.0	60.1	2.1
11th grade	70.3	71.6	1.3
12th grade	72.9	73.9	1.0
Low achievers	48.4	52.2	3.8*
Mid-low achievers	64.7	67.4	2.7*
Mid-high achievers	73.9	75.0	1.1
High achievers	83.7	84.7	1.0

*Indicate change is significant at the .05 level.

Changes by Political Knowledge and Attitude Categorizations

Changes in achievement also differed considerably with respect to concepts being assessed, as an examination of changes across the four political knowledge and attitude categories shows. For the most part, gains were concentrated in areas dealing with knowledge, while attitudes were more likely to remain constant.

As Table 7 reveals, both 13- and 17-year-olds improved in their awareness of the structure and function of the United States government and of the United States political process, two areas heavily dependent on knowledge about the U.S. governmental system. Respect for the rights of others did not change over the six-year period for either age group, meaning students' attitudes toward supporting and fostering the rights of others generally remained at the level seen in the mid-1970s. Awareness of and support for constitutional rights

climbed sharply for 13-year-olds, but did not change for 17-year-olds over the six-year period.

TABLE 7: Changes in Average Percent Correct Between 1976 and 1982 Citizenship/Social Studies Assessments by Poltical Knowledge and Attitude Categories, Ages 13 and 17.

13-year-olds

	No. of Items	1976	1982	Change
Structure and Function of Government	38	58.9%	61.2%	2.3*
Political Process	28	57.3	60.5	3.2*
Respect Rights of Others	25	74.6	76.0	1.4
Constitutional Rights	17	54.3	60.0	5.7*

17-year-olds

	No. of Items	1976	1982	Change
Structure and Function of Government	35	66.7%	69.2%	2.5*
Political Process	33	62.5	65.7	3.2*
Respect Rights of Others	17	77.8	78.6	.8
Constitutional Rights	14	70.6	70.1	-0.5

*Indicates change is significant at the .05 level.

Selected Group Results: Political Knowledge and Attitude Categories

Results for the various population groups showed some interesting variations by political knowledge and attitude categories. For example, there was very little difference in the performance of males and females on these categories with one striking exception (Table 8). A sizable difference between males and females was apparent on items designed to measure respect for the rights of others. Here females outdistanced males by 9 percentage points at age 13 and 8 percentage points at age 17.

TABLE 8: Average Differences From the Nation for Males and Females by Political Knowledge and Attitude Categories in 1982, Ages 13 and 17.

	Structure and Function of Government	Political Process	Respect for the Rights of Others	Constitutional Rights
Age 13				
Male	1.3	-1.2	-4.6*	-0.5
Female	-1.2	1.1	4.4*	0.6
Age 17				
Male	1.2	-0.8	-4.3*	-1.2
Female	-1.2	0.8	4.2*	1.1

*Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.

In 1982, Blacks and disadvantaged-urban residents were typically farthest below the nation on items measuring knowledge of the structure and function of government and closest to the nation on items assessing respect for the rights of others (Table 9). On items concerning the structure and function of government, Blacks trailed Whites by 10.5 and 12.4 percentage points at ages 13 and 17, respectively. However, on items measuring respect for the rights of others, the gap between Blacks and White narrowed to 5.7 percentage points for 13-year-olds, and the difference for 17-year-olds (2.0 percentage points) was not statistically significant. Similar trends were evident for disadvantaged-urban students, although among 13-year-olds, the largest gap between advantaged and disadvantaged-urban youngsters was seen on items assessing awareness of constitutional rights.

TABLE 9: Average Differences From the Nation for Blacks, Whites and Disadvantaged- and Advantaged-Urban Residents by Political Knowledge and Attitude Categories in 1982, Ages 13 and 17.

	Structure and Function of Government	Political Process	Respect for the Rights of Others	Constitutional Rights
Age 13				
Black	-8.5*	-5.8*	-4.6*	-6.9*
White	2.0	1.6	1.1	1.8
Disad.-urban	-7.5*	-7.1*	-4.9	-5.7*
Advan.-urban	3.2*	2.8	3.6*	7.0*
Age 17				
Black	-10.2*	-7.9*	-1.8	-5.6*
White	2.2*	1.9	0.2	1.2
Disad.-urban	-9.0*	-6.2*	-1.1	-4.3*
Advan.-urban	7.5*	8.8*	6.4*	7.0*

*Indicates difference is significant at the .05 level.

Summary

Between 1976 and 1982, teenagers improved their performance on citizenship/social studies items measuring political knowledge and attitudes -- 13-year-olds by nearly 3 percentage points and 17-year-olds by about 2 percentage points. Results for the various population groups indicated that improvements tended to be greater for lower achieving and disadvantaged students than for groups typically considered more advantaged. When results were analyzed by different areas of political knowledge and attitudes, gains were most apparent on categories dealing with knowledge about government and the political process, while categories concerned largely with attitudes typically showed little change over the six-year period spanned by the assessments. It is interesting to note that males and females performed about equally well on political knowledge and attitude items, with the exception of a sizable female advantage on items measuring respect for the rights of others. Blacks and disadvantaged-urban students were typically farthest below the nation on items dealing with knowledge about the structure and function of government and closest to national levels on items concerning respect for the rights of others.

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APPENDIX A

Definitions of National Assessment Reporting Groups

Students were categorized according to their membership in a number of NAEP reporting groups: racial/ethnic group, region of the country lived in, sex, type of community the students' school served, grade, parents' levels of education and achievement quartile. Definitions of the key subgroups follow.

Region

The country has been divided into four regions: Northeast, Southeast, Central and West.

Sex

Results are reported for males and females.

Race

Results are presented for Blacks and Whites.

Level of Parental Education

Three categories of parental-education levels are defined by National Assessment, based on students' reports. These categories are: (1) those whose parents did not graduate from high school, (2) those who have at least one parent who graduated from high school, (3) those who have at least one parent who has had some post-high-school education.

Type of Community

Communities in this category are defined by an occupational profile of the area served by a school as well as by the size of the community in which the

school is located. This reporting category excludes about two-thirds of the respondents who do not fall into the classifications listed below. Results for the excluded two-thirds are not reported because their performance is similar to that of the nation.

Advantaged-urban communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities having a population greater than 200,000 where a high proportion of the residents are in professional or managerial positions.

Disadvantaged-urban communities. Students in this group attend schools in or around cities having a population greater than 200,000 where a relatively high proportion of the residents are on welfare or are not regularly employed.

Extreme-rural communities. Students in this group attend schools in areas with a population under 10,000 where many of the residents are farmers or farm workers.

Grade in School

Results are categorized for 9-year-olds in the third or fourth grade; 13-year-olds in the seventh or eighth grade; and 17-year-olds in the tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade. For 9-year-olds, the modal grade (the grade in which most students at an age are enrolled) is the fourth grade; for 13-year-olds, the eighth grade; and for 17-year-olds, the eleventh grade. Approximately 75 percent of the students at each age are enrolled in the modal grade.

Achievement Class

The achievement class variable places each respondent at a given age into a category based on the respondent's estimated standing in the population in terms of achievement on a particular assessment. The classes are defined as follows:

Low:	The lowest quarter (students in the lowest 25 percent of the population in achievement).
Mid-low:	The next-to-lowest quarter (achieve higher than 25 percent and lower than 50 percent of the population).
Mid-high:	The next-to-highest quarter (achieve higher than 50 percent and lower than 25 percent of the population).
High:	The highest quarter (students in the upper 25 percent of the population on achievement).

The measure of achievement for an individual is the person's mean percent correct for a particular subject area. The mean percent correct for an individual is the ratio of the number of correct responses over the number of items attempted.